

respectfully request that the examiner remove the rejection with respect to dependent claims 6-7 and 30-31 as well.

E. Claims 20, 21, and 23

Claims 20, 21, and 23 depend from independent claim 19. The applicants repeat the remarks made above with respect to claim 19. If an independent claim is nonobvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious.¹⁷ Therefore, the applicants respectfully request that the examiner remove the rejection with respect to dependent claims 20, 21, and 23 as well.

F. Claim 22

Claim 22 depends from independent claim 19. The applicants repeat the remarks made above with respect to claim 19. If an independent claim is nonobvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious.¹⁸ Therefore, the applicants respectfully request that the examiner remove the rejection with respect to dependent claim 22 as well.

G. Claim 24

Claim 24 depends from independent claim 19. The applicants repeat the remarks made above with respect to claim 19. If an independent claim is nonobvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103, then any claim depending therefrom is nonobvious.¹⁹ Therefore, the applicants respectfully request that the examiner remove the rejection with respect to dependent claim 24.

VI. AMENDMENTS MADE NOT RELATED TO PATENTABILITY

The applicants have amended claims 20-26 to more clearly, correctly, and properly claim the invention and not for purposes of patentability. Specifically, the applicants have amended the preamble to relate more consistently with the preamble of claim 19.

These statements are not an admission that the other amendments were made for purposes of patentability, meant to be limiting in any way, or meant to be all-inclusive of amendments not made for purposes of patentability.

CONCLUSION

The applicants respectfully request reconsideration the pending claims and that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. If the examiner feels that a telephone conference would expedite the resolution of this case, he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned.

¹⁷ *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

¹⁸ *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

¹⁹ *In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

In the course of the foregoing discussions, the applicants may have at times referred to claim limitations in shorthand fashion, or may have focused on a particular claim element. This discussion should not be interpreted to mean that the other limitations can be ignored or dismissed. The claims must be viewed as a whole, and each limitation of the claims must be considered when determining the patentability of the claims. There may also be other distinctions between the claims and the prior art that have yet to be raised, but that may be raised in the future.

Unless the applicants have specifically stated that an amendment was made to distinguish the prior art, it was the intent of the amendment to further clarify and better define the claimed invention and the amendment was not for the purpose of patentability. Further, although the applicants may have amended certain claims, the applicants have not abandoned their pursuit of obtaining the allowance of these claims as originally filed and reserves, without prejudice, the right to pursue these claims in a continuing application.

If any fees are inadvertently omitted or if any additional fees are required or have been overpaid, please appropriately charge or credit those fees to Conley Rose, P.C. Deposit Account Number 03-2769 (ref. 1391-43100) of Conley Rose, P.C., Houston, Texas.

Respectfully submitted,
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